

ANALYSIS OF BUNCOMBE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE SEPTEMBER 25, 2024


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<div> <div>Buncombe County Schools</div> <div>District Website: </div> </div>	
2014-15 District Profile	2022-23 District Profile
<div> <div>Total Count</div> <div>Schools Students</div> <div>43 24,761</div> </div>	<div> <div>Total Count</div> <div>Schools Students</div> <div>45 21,843</div> </div>

How the School Performance Grade is Determined

- Eighty percent of the grade is based on the school achievement score, which is determined by points earned on accountability measures for that school.
- Twenty percent of the grade is based on academic growth. School academic growth represents the academic progress of a student compared to the average progress of students across the state in a given grade or subject. When the state has compelling evidence that the students in a school are progressing far above the average, the school is exceeding expected growth. When there is evidence that the students in a school are progressing consistently with the average, the school is meeting expected growth.

2022-23 Overall Performance		
School Performance Grades		School Growth Status
2023 ▾		2023 ▾
A	3	6.8%
B	12	27.3%
C	19	43.2%
D	9	20.5%
F	1	2.3%
		Exceeded 20 47.6%
		Met 13 31.0%
		NotMet 9 21.4%
		School Academic Growth represents the academic progress of a student compared to the average progress of students across the state in a given grade and/or subject. When the state has compelling evidence that the students in a school are progressing far above the average, the school is exceeding expected growth. When there is evidence that the students in a school are progressing consistent with the average, the school is meeting expected growth.

School Performance Grading Scale

NC Grade Range	Letter Grade	Wikipedia*
85-100	A	90-100
70-84	B	80-89
55-69	C	70-79
40-54	D	60-69
Below 40	F	Below 60

* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_grading_in_the_United_States)

The grades provided (below) by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) use the NC Grade Range (column 1 above), which is more generous in allowing students to pass with lower scores. The third column above (Wikipedia*) demands a higher level of performance to achieve the same letter grade. This column represents the percentage value in use by the grading system found to be most used in United Schools public high schools, according to the [2009 High School Transcript Study](#).

The weblink approved by the incumbent yields the following data.

<https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/district?district=110LEA&year=2023>

Overall Performance Grades:

2014-15 Overall Performance				
School Performance Grades			School Growth Status	
2015 ▾			2015 ▾	
A	2	4.9%	Exceeded	5 12.5%
B	16	39.0%	Met	25 62.5%
C	20	48.8%	NotMet	10 25.0%
D	3	7.3%	School Academic Growth represents the academic progress of a student compared to the average progress of students across the state in a given grade and/or subject.	

2022-23 Overall Performance			
School Performance Grades			School Growth Status
2023 ▾			2023 ▾
A	3	6.8%	Exceeded 20 47.6%
B	12	27.3%	Met 13 31.0%
C	19	43.2%	NotMet 9 21.4%
D	9	20.5%	When the state has compelling evidence that the students in a school are progressing far above the average, the school is exceeding expected growth. When there is evidence that the students in a school are progressing consistent with the average, the school is meeting expected growth.
F	1	2.3%	

Key Observations

1. Improvement in Schools Earning an "A" Grade:

- **Current Year:** 3 schools (6.8%) received an "A."
- **2015:** 2 schools (4.9%) received an "A."
- **Analysis:** While the number of schools earning an "A" increased from 2 to 3, this improvement is not as strong when considering the overall increase in schools. The percentage of schools receiving an "A" has increased only slightly, but this may be due more to the growing number of schools than a substantial improvement in performance across the board.

2. Decrease in Schools Earning a "B" Grade:

- **Current Year:** 12 schools (27.3%) earned a "B."
- **2015:** 16 schools (39%) earned a "B."
- **Analysis:** Even with the increase in the total number of schools, there is still a notable drop in both the absolute number and percentage of schools achieving a "B" grade. This observation suggests that a significant portion of schools previously in the "B" category may have shifted into lower performance categories despite the overall growth in the number of schools.

3. Stability in Schools Earning a "C" Grade:

- **Current Year:** 19 schools (43.2%) earned a "C."
- **2015:** 20 schools (48.8%) earned a "C."
- **Analysis:** The number of schools earning a "C" has remained relatively stable despite the increase in total schools. However, the slight decrease in percentage suggests that more schools may be moving into lower-performing categories (such as "D") as the school system grows.

4. Significant Increase in Schools Earning a "D" Grade:

- **Current Year:** 9 schools (20.5%) earned a "D."
- **2015:** 3 schools (7.3%) earned a "D."
- **Analysis:** The rise in schools receiving a "D" grade is concerning, especially when factoring in the growing number of schools. The percentage increase is significant, suggesting a trend where more schools are underperforming, regardless of the overall system expansion. This conclusion indicates a potential decline in overall school quality.

5. Introduction of Schools Receiving an "F" Grade:

- **Current Year:** 1 school (2.3%) received an "F."
- **2015:** No schools received an "F."
- **Analysis:** The appearance of a school receiving an "F" grade is particularly troubling. Even with more schools in the system, the fact that any school has dropped to this level is a strong indicator that certain schools are not receiving the

General Trends

- **Impact of More Schools:** The overall increase in the number of schools does help explain why the raw numbers for each grade may have changed. However, the percentage distribution shows that despite the growth in the number of schools, more are moving into lower-performing categories (C, D, and F) relative to 2015.
- **Performance Decline:** Even with the additional schools, the fact that the percentage of "B" grade schools has decreased while the "D" and "F" grades have increased highlights a downward trend in school performance across Buncombe County. This suggests that improvements in overall educational quality have not accompanied the growth in the number of schools.

Implications

- The increase in the number of schools should not mask the fact that a larger share of schools is now performing in the lower categories (D and F). While there are more schools overall, the trends still indicate a worrying decline in the quality of education being delivered.
- Voters should take into account that even though there are more schools today, the education system's ability to keep up with this growth in terms of maintaining high standards has not been successful. The growing number of underperforming schools needs urgent attention to reverse this trend.

Conclusion

While the number of schools has increased, the core concern remains: the percentage of schools in lower-performance categories (D and F) is rising, while schools achieving higher grades (B and A) are not increasing in proportion. This fact reinforces the need for a fresh approach to school improvement, something my campaign is addressing head-on.

Additional Information

As required by North Carolina statute, a Low-performing school has received a School Performance Grade of 'D' or 'F' and a growth status of 'Met' or 'Not Met'.

The link provided by the incumbent states that 10 of the 42 Buncombe County schools (24%) have been designated as low-performing.

Proficiency Measurements

In our campaign, we initially chose to rely on **multiple data sources**, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), and local school district reports. Each of these sources provides **valuable insights** into student performance, graduation rates, discipline, and other key measures, ensuring that we present voters with a more **complete picture** of the state of Buncombe County Schools.

While the incumbent suggested using a **single data source**, we have now opted to incorporate the data she prefers in an effort to **move beyond the argument** over whose data is correct. After reviewing both datasets, it is clear that **they do not paint different pictures** of student outcomes. Whether we use the Jim Fulton campaign's original data sources or the incumbent's, the conclusion remains the same: **Buncombe County Schools must make changes** to some of its educational approaches to improve student outcomes.

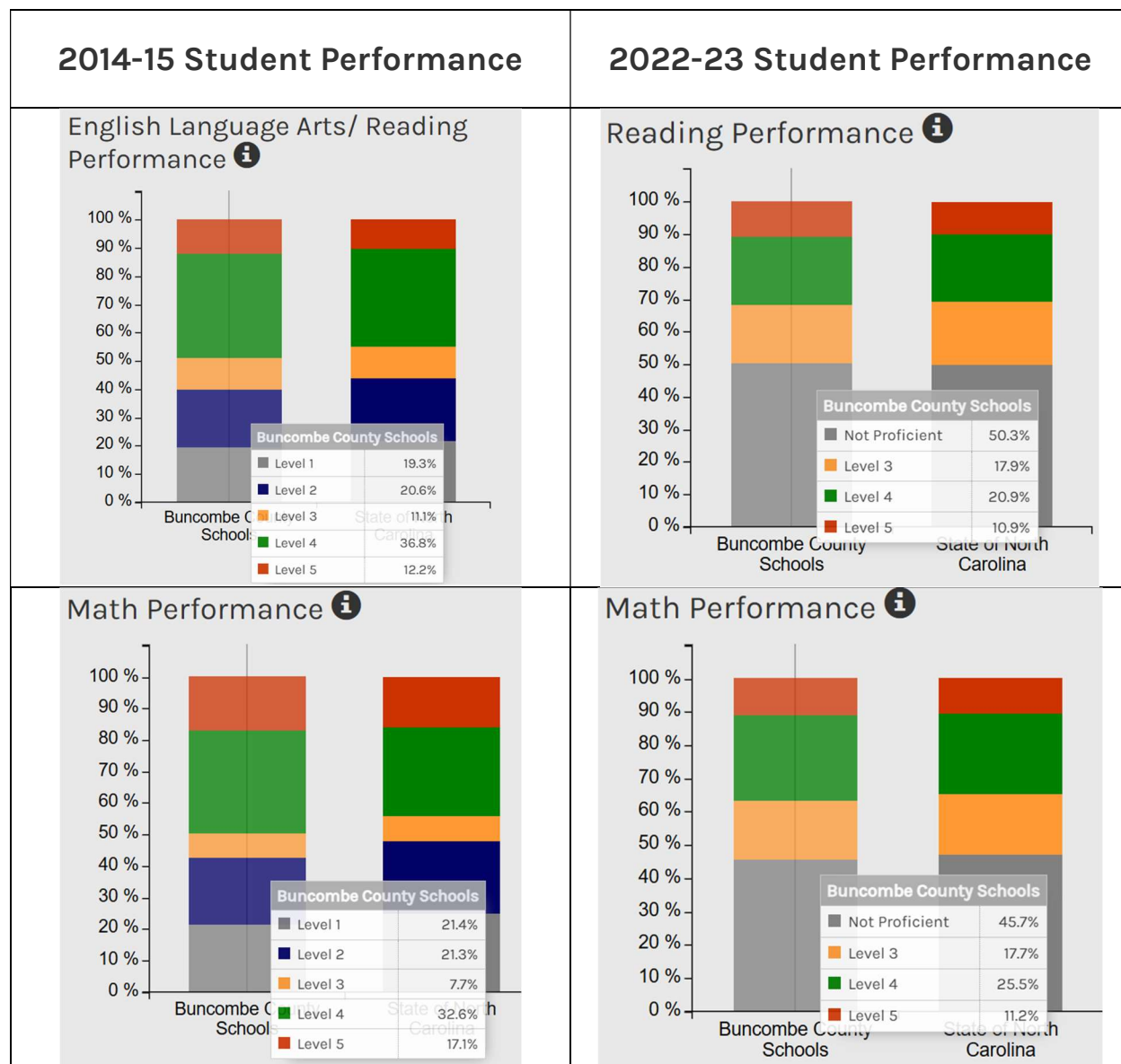
The incumbent would have voters believe that everything in our schools is wonderful and improving daily. I do not accept that line of thought. The data—whether from my sources or hers—speaks for itself, and it clearly **demands action** to address areas where our students are struggling.

While I could be enjoying my well-deserved retirement by spending time with family, working around the house and yard, traveling, or indulging in hobbies, I have chosen instead to use my **experience and skills** to serve our community. We must prioritize the **improvement of our schools**, ensuring our children receive the education they deserve and need to thrive in an increasingly competitive world.

This campaign is not about **debating statistics**; it is about recognizing the facts and using them to drive **positive, results-oriented change**. Both datasets show that we can do better for our children, and I am committed to working towards that goal with the **transparency, accountability, and dedication** that our community deserves.

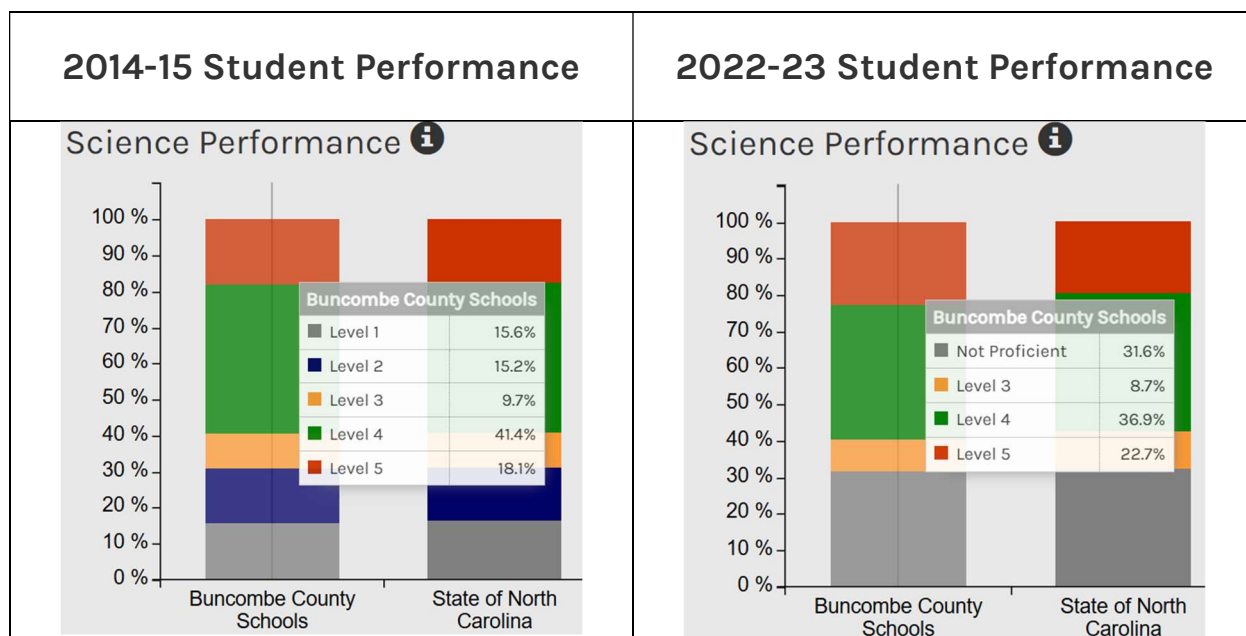
Reading, Math & Science Proficiency Ratings Comparison

“Not Proficient” (Levels 1 & 2) is below grade level. Level 3 is grade level proficient. Levels 4 and 5 indicate students are on track for career and college readiness.



The incumbent referred us to a weblink on her website as the “correct” source for school report cards data:

<https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/district?district=110LEA&year=2023>.

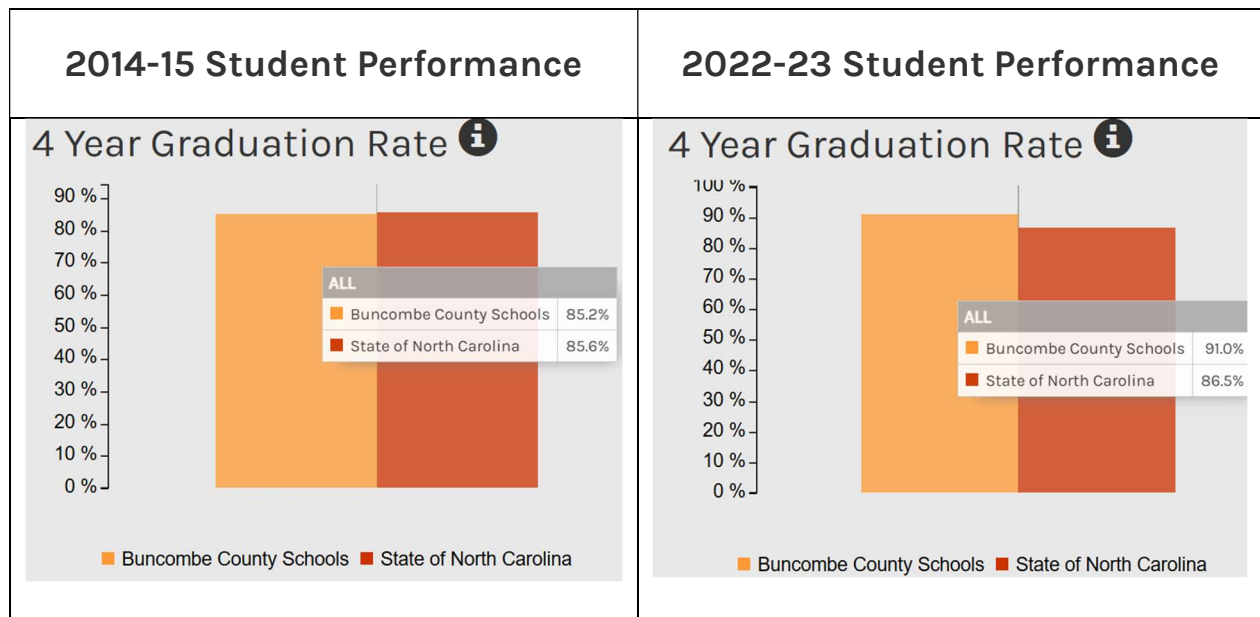


Key Observations from the Data Comparison (2015 vs 2023)

- Reading Proficiency:**
 - Incumbent's Data:** Declines from 60% in 2015 to 50% in 2023.
 - Analysis:** This is a significant drop in reading proficiency, according to the incumbent's data, suggesting a decline in student reading performance over the past eight years.
- Math Proficiency:**
 - Incumbent's Data:** Declines slightly from 57% in 2015 to 54% in 2023.
 - Analysis:** While the decline in math proficiency in the incumbent's data is not as severe as in reading, it still suggests some erosion in student math performance.
- Science Proficiency:**
 - Incumbent's Data:** Drops from 69% in 2015 to 68% in 2023.
 - Analysis:** Both data sets show a decrease, although the drop in the incumbent's data is minimal. Science proficiency remains relatively strong compared to reading and math.
- Proficiency Rates:** According to the incumbent's data, proficiency rates in reading and math have declined over the years despite a slight improvement in science. **This decline is concerning as foundational skills in reading and math are essential for student success across subjects.**
- Focus on Improvement:** The downward trends in reading and math proficiency, according to the incumbent's data, should be a priority for intervention. Targeted support for struggling students and accountability for school performance could help reverse these declines.

4 Year Graduation Rate

The four-year cohort graduation rate shows the percent of students who graduate in four years or less after first enrolling in 9th grade.

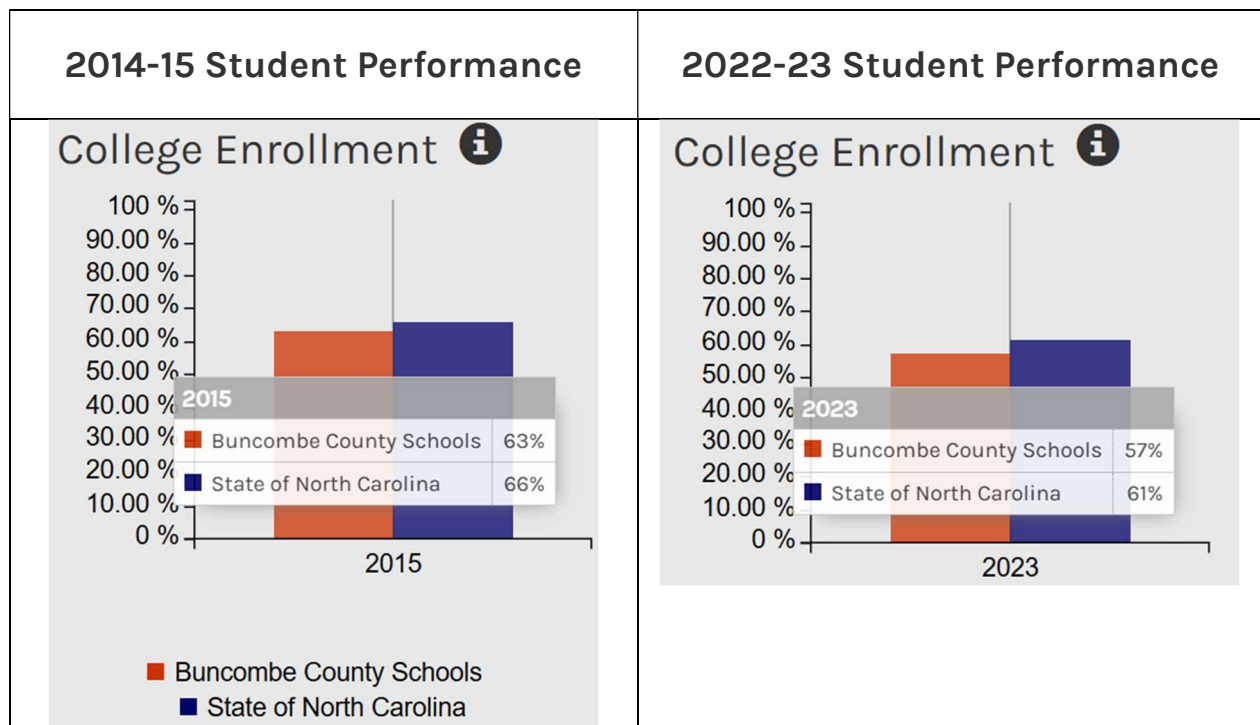


- **High School Graduation Rates:**
 - **Incumbent's Data:** Increases from 85% to 91%.
 - **Analysis:** The incumbent's data reflects an improvement in graduation rates, suggesting better retention and completion rates in recent years.
- **Graduation Rates:** The increase in graduation rates (91%) in the incumbent's data is a positive sign, but it should be viewed in context with the proficiency data. **If students are graduating without sufficient proficiency in critical subjects, this could indicate a systemic issue where students are promoted without meeting performance standards.**

College Enrollment

College enrollment is a measure of how many high school graduates enrolled in an Institution of Higher Education (IHE).

The information provided shows the number and percentage of NC public high school graduates from the class one school year prior to the year that you are viewing, who enrolled in an IHE within 16 months of earning a regular high school diploma. For example, for the reporting year of 2015-16, the high school graduates received a diploma in the 2014-15 school year.



- **College Enrollment:**
 - **Incumbent's Data:** Decreases from 63% in 2015 to 57% in 2023.
 - **Analysis:** A reduction in college enrollment could indicate that fewer students are pursuing higher education after high school, which may raise concerns about post-graduation opportunities and preparedness.

Suspensions and Expulsions (per 100 Students)

This chart describes some student behavior and discipline issues:

- Criminal Acts - Number of criminal acts per 100 students
- Short-term Suspensions - Number of short-term suspensions per 100 students
- Long-Term Suspensions - Number of long-term suspensions per 100 students
- Expulsions - Number of expulsions per 100 students

Rates per 100 are calculated by dividing the total number of crimes or suspensions/expulsions by student membership at the State, District, or School level, and then multiplying by 100. This statistic allows for general comparison of one entity to another by controlling for differences in student population size.

2014-15 School Environment

School Category	Criminal Acts	Short-term Suspensions	Long-term Suspensions	Expulsions
Elementary	0.16	2.22	0.00	0.00
Middle	0.92	15.76	0.00	0.00
High	2.17	19.23	0.06	0.00
TOTALS	3.25	37.21	0.06	0.00
40.52				

2022-23 School Environment

Note that the 2022-23 statistics are measured at rates per 1000, calculated by dividing the total number of crimes or suspensions/expulsions by student membership at the State, District, or School level, and then multiplying by 1000. This statistic allows for general comparison of one entity to another by controlling for differences in student population size.

Suspensions and Expulsions (per 1000 Students in Subgroup)

Subgroup	Short-term Suspensions	Long-term Suspensions	Expulsions	In-school Suspensions
ALL	179.42	0.37	0.00	255.87

Rate per 100	17.9	0.04	0.00	25.59
TOTAL Suspensions per 100 Students:	43.53			

Acts of Bullying, Law Enforcement Referrals and Arrests (per 1000 Students in Subgroup)

Subgroup	Bullying and Harassment	Referral to Law Enforcement	Arrests	Criminal Acts
ALL	8.52	16.16	0.00	16.30

Rate per 100	.85	1.61	0.00	1.63
Total Disciplinary Incidents:	47.62			

- **Disciplinary Cases per 100 Students:**
 - **Incumbent's Data:** Significant increase from 40 in 2015 to 48 in 2023.
 - **Analysis:** The incumbent's data shows a much higher rate of disciplinary issues than the data originally used by the Vote4JimFulton.com campaign, indicating potential concerns with school climate and/or student behavior.

Disciplinary Breakdown:

- **Bullying & Harassment:** Appears only in 2023 with a count of 1 per 100 students.
- **Criminal Acts:** Slight decrease in the incumbent's data from 3 (2015) to 2 (2023).
- **Short-Term Suspensions:** Incumbent's data shows a substantial drop from 37 to 18.
- **In-School Suspensions:** Appears in 2023 with a count of 26 in the incumbent's data.

General Commentary:

- **Disciplinary Trends:** The increase in disciplinary cases in the incumbent's data is a red flag. The rise in overall disciplinary actions, combined with higher instances of suspensions, could point to challenges in maintaining a safe and supportive school environment.

Recommendations:

- **Student Behavior & Support:** The rise in disciplinary cases suggests a need to examine school culture and the effectiveness of behavior management programs. Schools should ensure adequate counseling and support services are in place.
 - Consideration should also be given to ensure that an adequate number of **School Resource officers** are deployed across the school system.
-

Fulton Campaign Data Sources

The data sources used by the Jim Fulton campaign include the following:

Reading, Math, and Science Proficiency

- **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):** <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:** <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting>
- **Local School District Reports and Data:**
 - Buncombe County Schools: https://www.buncombeschools.org/departments/communications/quick_facts
 - Asheville City Schools: <https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/Page/1>

High School Graduation Rates

- **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):** https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp
- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:** <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting>
- **Local School District Reports and Data:**
 - Buncombe County Schools: https://www.buncombeschools.org/departments/communications/quick_facts
 - Asheville City Schools: <https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/Page/1>

College & Career Readiness

- **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):** https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cpa.asp
- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:** <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting>
- **Local School District Reports and Data:**
 - Buncombe County Schools: https://www.buncombeschools.org/departments/communications/quick_facts
 - Asheville City Schools: <https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/Page/1>

Disciplinary Cases per 100 Students

- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:** <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting>
- **Local School District Reports and Data:**
 - Buncombe County Schools: https://www.buncombeschools.org/departments/communications/quick_facts
 - Asheville City Schools: <https://www.ashevillecityschools.net/Page/1>
- **U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Data Collection:** <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>
- **The incumbent referred us to a weblink on her website as the “correct” source for school report cards data:** <https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/district?district=110LEA&year=2023>.